

SA 66-5547
Executive Registry

66-3547

12 August 1966

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT: [REDACTED]

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1. This memorandum contains a recommendation in paragraph 6 for approval by the Director of Central Intelligence.

2. On Monday, 1 August 1966, I saw [REDACTED] in Los Angeles. We were later joined at lunch by his lawyer, [REDACTED]

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3. These are two extremely pleasant and apparently earnest young men. Their basic thought is that TV has an enormous power to influence public opinion and it, therefore, should have a responsibility to inform the public objectively and positively on public affairs. Thus, in their opinion, not only CIA is getting bad reporting in the press but also law-enforcement agencies have been much maligned. Therefore, they have seized on CIA as one which they believe they can do something about by doing a series which would depict its role in Government; characterize its employees as hard-working, intelligent, decent people; and remove the aura of mystery and fear that they believe surrounds the Agency in the public eye.

4. I discussed the problems we have had in the past in any sort of public-relations effort and our basic policy guidance to avoid publicity. They readily agreed that they could not have any actual case histories or access to files of any sort but that they were not willing to give up that easily. [REDACTED] said it was up to him to get writers who could make the story and all he wanted was guidance that the stories stayed within bounds of actuality and gave a reasonably accurate picture of intelligence activities. They were, for instance, struck by the possibilities

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(EXECUTIVE REGISTRY FILE [REDACTED])

in the Cuban Missile Crisis--the story of bits and pieces of information coming from all types of sources all over the world into the intelligence machinery and ending with the intelligence product guiding the President in his decision. I said of course they were free to write any such story they wished but that we could not be associated with it. They then questioned whether they might get some senior retired official who could act as their technical adviser. I said again we could not prevent this, although such a person might have security problems. [] did say that any such series to be effective should have the initials "CIA" somewhere in the title. Again, we could not effectively prevent this, although I think they might drop it if we asked them to.

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5. I left it that I was pessimistic as to any encouragement from Washington but that I would discuss our conversation with you and in due time let them have our reaction. My hunch is that they might start off on a series with all good intentions, but once they found the idea had less drama and public appeal than they thought, the financial aspects would require them to go into a typical espionage series with all the gimmicks, sex, and nonsense.

6. Attached is a proposed letter from me, and if you approve I will dispatch it unless you want to write to them for any reason.

s/

LAWRENCE R. HOUSTON
General Counsel

Attachment

The attached letter is
approved for dispatch

s/

Director of Central Intelligence

15 August 1966

Date

Distribution:

O-OGC

✓ 1-DCI

1-ER

1-Asst to DCI []

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12 August 1966

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Los Angeles, California

STAT Dear

STAT I very much enjoyed my meeting and luncheon with you and I wish I could have taken up your offer to see some of the sets in action, but I could not take the chance of losing my plane reservation under present circumstances.

I have related our conversation to Mr. Helms and have discussed your concept at some length. He, too, much appreciates what you wish to do, and we went through the pros and cons in considerable detail. Basically, the answer comes down to the fact that our policy guidance is to keep out of the public eye as much as possible. Obviously, we have not been too successful in recent months, and since the publicity we have received is not of our seeking, it is mostly bad. But the decision is that this is something we will have to live with and hope to see an end to this spate of public incidents.

We are not in a position, of course, to control any program you wish to develop, nor can we forbid the use of the Agency's name or initials in the title. If our wishes were to be considered, however, we would hope that there would be no television series purporting to portray the activities of this Agency, and we would most earnestly hope not to have a series utilizing the name of the Agency or its initials. I am most reluctant to say this, as I am convinced that you want only to help and that you believe through television you could contribute to a healthier public opinion of this Agency.

If you want to talk further, I would be glad to do so in mid-September after my vacation, and in any case we are most appreciative of your thoughts and good wishes.

Sincerely,

s/

Lawrence R. Houston
General Counsel